

What is Your Food Safety I.Q.?

By Heather DeVore
Bureau of Consumer Health

With Valentine's Day around the corner, you may be planning to take somebody special out to eat at a favorite restaurant or you may decide to stay home and cook. Whether you are dining in or dining out, how will you know if the foods you are eating are safe?

Here are a few questions to test your food safety I.Q. and help you plan for a safe Valentine's Day dinner.

1. What should the temperature in your refrigerator be?

- a. 30-33°F.
- b. 42-45°F.
- c. 37-40°F.



Answer: c. The temperature in a refrigerator should be between 37-40°F to keep your foods 41°F or below. A food temperature of 41°F or below will slow the growth of bacteria and will keep bacteria from multiplying. You can check the temperature in your refrigerator with a hanging refrigerator thermometer.

2. After how many days in the refrigerator should your leftovers be discarded?

- a. 2 weeks.
- b. 7 days.
- c. 10 days.

Answer: b. Date leftovers and use within a safe time. Generally leftovers remain safe for up to seven days. The growth of some bacteria, such as *Listeria monocytogenes*, is slowed but not stopped by refrigeration. Over a period of time, this and similar organisms may multiply in foods and cause illness if consumed. Remember: When in doubt, throw it out.

3. What is the best way to cool leftovers?

- a. Loosely cover leftovers and place in the refrigerator immediately after serving or bringing home.
- b. Cool leftovers on the counter and then place in the refrigerator.
- c. Store on counter overnight to cool completely.

Answer: a. Improper cooling is the number one way food borne illness is spread, therefore rapid cooling is key. Hot foods should be refrigerated as soon as possible (within two hours after cooking). Do not keep the food if it's been sitting out more than two hours. It is important to never let foods cool on the counter. Also, small quantities of food are easier to cool than large quantities.

When it comes time for your meal to be served, remember this tip: Hot foods should be held and served hot and cold foods should be held and served cold.

These food safety tips will help ensure a safe Valentine's Day meal. For the answers to more food safety questions, visit http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/fpcs/food_quiz.html.